

NEWS

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Camden Man Indicted in Connection with Murder, an attempted Murder of a Witness and Cocaine Distribution

(More)

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CAMDEN – A Camden man was indicted today for murdering another Camden man in the furtherance of a cocaine and crack cocaine distribution conspiracy and for attempting to murder a witness to the murder, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Juan Rivera-Velez, 32, a.k.a. “Junito,” and “Two-Face,” was indicted on a four-count Superseding Indictment. Counts One and Two are added to the original Indictment. Count One charges conspiracy to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine. Count Two charges murder in furtherance of the conspiracy to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine. Count Three and Four, which were included in the original two-count Indictment, returned on June 14, 2006, charge attempted murder of a witness to a murder and using a firearm in relation to witness tampering, respectively.

The Superseding Indictment describes a scheme in which, from 1993 through April 2003, Rivera-Velez conspired with Raymond Morales and others to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine in the Camden area. According to the Indictment, during and in relation to the drug conspiracy, Rivera-Velez used a handgun to deliberately and with premeditation shoot and kill Miguel Batista, a/k/a “Ito,” on Sept. 26, 1996.

The Indictment also alleges that on April 5, 2003, Rivera-Velez attempted to kill Rafael Colon-Rodriguez, by shooting him in the head, with the intent to prevent Colon-Rodriguez from communicating with law enforcement and possibly providing testimony in court regarding the drug-related murder of Miguel Batista. Colon-Rodriguez survived the attempt on his life.

Gerard P. McAleer, Special Agent in Charge of the DEA New Jersey Division stated, “This displays the commitment we have within the law enforcement community that we will hold those responsible for the heinous crimes that they commit in New Jersey.”

The charge in Count One, conspiracy to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine, carries a mandatory minimum prison term of 10 years and a maximum statutory penalty of life in prison and a \$4 million fine. Count Two, charging murder in furtherance of the conspiracy to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine, is death penalty eligible and carries prison sentence of up to life. Count Three charging attempted murder to tamper with a witness carries a statutory maximum prison term of 20 years. Count Four charging use of a firearm in relation to witness tampering carries a mandatory minimum prison term of 10 years and maximum prison term of life, which must be served consecutive to any other sentence.

In determining an actual sentence, the judge to whom the case is assigned would, upon a conviction, consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal

system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Despite indictment, each of the defendants is presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited the Special Agents of the DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer in Newark, Investigators with the Camden County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Unit, under the direction of Acting Camden County Prosecutor James P. Lynch, and Investigators with the member agencies of the Philadelphia/Camden HIDTA Task Force, with developing the investigation which resulted in today's Superseding Indictment. The Philadelphia/Camden HIDTA Task Force is comprised of the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the Districts of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania, The Camden County Prosecutor's Office, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, DEA, FBI, ATF, Camden Police Department, New Jersey State Police, Philadelphia Police Department, New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice, Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, Camden County Sheriff's Department, Delaware River Port Authority Police and the U.S. Marshal's Service.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Diana V. Carrig of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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